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ABSTRACT

Viable reading education programs require faculty who not only know the field but also remain sensitive to the many forces controlling program survival. A program will function well only if the administration clearly articulates the management process, responds intelligently to market trends, and includes faculty input in decision making. Among the issues that need to be addressed are (1) how curriculum issues should be controlled; (2) who should control the management aspects of reading education; (3) how resources should be allocated, and what part reading faculty should play in budget expenditures; (4) how other teacher education programs relate to reading education; (5) what external influences control reading education; and (6) how reading education is responding to the changing market. These issues combined with curriculum content analysis form the basis for solid review, planning, and renewal in reading education. (HOD)

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# THE GOVERNANCE OF READING EDUCATION: A POSITION PAPER

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# THE GOVERNANCE OF READING EDUCATION: A POSITION PAPER

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Reading education programs have been subjected to the same scrutiny as higher education has generally. The numerous recent national reports characterizing the current status of education (National Commission on Excellence in Education, Carnegie Foundation, Paideia Proposal, etc.) continue to raise questions about the quality of professional training in education. Public uneasiness about education frequently results in questions of money and control -- areas of higher education activity in which faculty often have limited participation.

If reading education is to remain strong and relevant through "the hard times," faculty need to develop perspectives about the profession which include knowledge beyond program content and theoretical research. Bailey (1980, p. ix-x) says,

> "As budgets (higher education) get together, as enrollments decline, as new claims for social justice (by minorities, women, the handicapped, and the elderly) press relentlessly on administrators, faculty, and staff, neurotic manifestations of fears can only exacerbate interpersonal cussedness. . . .In such circumstances, the civilized treatment of others does not imply trying to please everyone. It means building trust by sharing dilemmas and allowing "multiple" but not "infinite" inputs to decisions."

Viable reading education programs require faculty who not only know the field but also remain sensitive to the many forces which control program survival.

A search of the literature and a perusal of policy publications from the International Reading Association yield little of value to help the reading educator make decisions about programs. The field study of The Torch Lighters in 1961 and the follow-up study, The Torch Lighters Revisited (Morrison & Austin, 1977) shed light on the status of reading education in teacher preparatory programs. The latter serves as a useful guide for curriculum implementation and development. No study or issues paper attempts to conduct a policy analysis of the administration of reading education. So often practitioners exclaim that the success of a school reading program rests with the principal, that he or she sets the tone for the curriculum. In a very real sense a reading education program functions well only if the administration clearly articulates the management process, responds intelligently to market trends, and includes faculty input in decision-making. Determining program quality, balance, and integrity requires an informed and involved faculty.

This discussion identifies some issues to be addressed by reading educators. Stated in the interrogative form, the issues are:

(1) How are curriculum issues controlled?

(2) Who controls the management aspects of reading education?

(3) How are resources allocated, and what part do reading faculty play in budget expenditures?

(4) How do other teacher education programs relate to reading education?

(5) What external influences control reading education?

(6) How is reading education responding to the changing market?

These questions suggest that in addition to academic interests, reading educators should be conscious of those factors which delineate the basis for instructional and professional support. At the very least, faculty need an understanding of program administration which spans departmental, school, institutional and extra-institutional perspectives. In times of economic restrictions, decisions about programs are sometimes made quickly and arbitrarily. Faculty who are aware of the issues surrounding such decisions can raise crucial questions and give reasoned input to influence the choices made.

## ISSUES OF CONTROL OVER CURRICULUM

Several problems crucial to the operation of reading education programs appear to be surfacing in institutions of higher education. The collapsing of administrative units and the reduction of numbers of instructional personnel have often imposed upon programs changes which are generated externally. What is taught in a reading methods course may conceivably be determined by a curriculum committee largely composed of non-language arts instructors. Course scheduling which provides for optimum teaching experiences may not be feasible because of enrollment considerations. Clinic operation costs are being viewed by many institutions as too costly to continue.

Threats to program control are at times unavoidable; yet much can be done by reading faculty if they are willing to assume responsibility for understanding the problems and are willing to participate in the processes of self-evaluation and recommendation. These activities take time from study, research, and writing, but they may well be a priority for this decade.

Administrative Issues

Faculty in higher education are often reluctant to spend time doing the tedious jobs of course scheduling and participating on search and recruitment committees. These efforts steal precious hours from more crucial teaching and research projects. Administrative tasks, however, play critical roles in program development. Course time scheduling, enrollment ratios, and equity in teaching loads influence program quality and faculty morale. Hiring decisions demand direct and precise input from faculty to assure program growth. Conversely, faculty can also best communicate priorities when reduction in personnel becomes necessary. When teachers accept a role in the management of higher education, programs have the best chance for continuation.

Resource Allocations

Any basic management text describes the importance of budgeting as a tool for planning and control. Budgeting in higher education varies from that of industry because the goals, products, and services are frequently abstract in nature. Reading educators may not be schooled in program budgeting; however, they have a right to know the plan for resource allocation and the procedures for making budget requests. An accounting of expenditures during a fiscal year can show the extent of funding for the reading program as compared with similar programs within a department or division. The old saying, "the squeaky wheel gets the grease," seems to have a certain validity in higher education resource allocations.

Reading as a Part of the Broader Teacher Education Program

Both graduate and undergraduate reading courses typically function as a part of more inclusive units of teacher education. Even separate graduate degree programs in reading often service programs in related areas, such as special education, adult education, or school psychology. Undergraduate reading courses are clustered with methods courses in other content areas to form the professional experience for a number of degree programs. When reading faculty plan jointly with faculty in other areas, they grasp more accurately course content needs. Logistical considerations for scheduling and practicum placement receive greater understanding and endorsement. Communication among faculty about the interrelationship of courses creates a feeling of unity and usually adds to the continuity within the total program.

External Influences on Reading Curriculum

Reading education, like other aspects of teacher education, is subject to pressures from outside the ivory tower. National accreditation (NCATE) sets standards for faculty qualifications, program content and clinical experience. State departments and advisory councils delineate certification guidelines which affect course and program requirements. Policies of school systems influence the nature of field activities, the materials used in courses, the generation of student enrollment and, sometimes, the very direction of a university program. These outside pressures are not easily ignored. They have a direct bearing on the success of a program, but must be balanced against a commitment to professional quality.

Response to the Changing Market in Reading Education

A change in program direction requires a careful long-term prediction of market trends. Impersonal as it sounds, it is a positive approach to revitalization and growth. Typically, questions to be answered through market analysis might include the following:

(1) Is the focus of the reading program consistent with the need for reading professionals in the schools and agencies from which we draw clientele?

(2) Have we engaged in needs-assessment activities with schools and agencies to determine the market for staff development in reading.

(3) Are we involved in systematic program and product evaluation to assess the quality of our programs as judged by former students and their employers?

(4) Are alternative course delivery systems used to accommodate clientele?

(5) Has long-range program scheduling taken into consideration increasing or decreasing markets for special interest within reading?

Educational programs cannot and should not be dramatically altered as is sometimes done in the business world; however, a strong program is one that is flexible enough to respond to special needs while maintaining a stable framework. Recent interest in computer resources in reading, integrating reading and writing instruction, and developing the competencies of non-language arts teachers to teach reading in content areas are examples of course options which are useful to both specialists and non-specialists. They respond to a broad constituency and offset reduced enrollments in other program courses.

Summary

The issues raised in this paper are not intended to add to the burdens of reading educators. They are presented to create an appreciation for the range of concerns that need to be addressed by the profession. The Carnegie Council on Higher Education recommends introspective and strategic planning as the guiding principles in higher education for the next twenty years. I submit that the issues identified in this paper combined with curriculum content analysis form the basis for review, planning, and renewal in reading education.

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